

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GR
SUBJ: LEFTIST LABOR FACTIONS GENERATE A DISPUTE OVER MAY DAY
CELEBRATION

1. SUMMARY: THE CELEBRATION OF MAY DAY MAY PROVIDE A TEST OF FACTIONAL STRENGTH WITHIN THE GREEK GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (GSEE). CENTER AND RIGHTIST FACTIONS HAVE AGREED TO CELEBRATE ON MAY 1, WHICH THIS YEAR FALLS ON EASTER MONDAY, A MAJOR GREEK RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY. HOWEVER, LEFTIST FACTIONS WITHIN THE GSEE HAVE CALLED UPON THEIR FOLLOWERS TO RALLY INSTEAD ON MAY 4 AND TO COUPLE THEIR OBSERVANCE WITH A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE. AS YET, THE GOG HAS NOT REACTED PUBLICLY TO THE THREAT OF A WILDCAT, POLITICALLY MOTIVATED STRIKE, WHICH WOULD BE ILLEGAL ACCORDING TO GREEK LABOR LAW. END SUMMARY

2. THE GSEE LEADERSHIP OPENED THE DOOR TO A CONFRONTATION WITH LEFTIST LABOR FACTIONS OVER THE DATE OF MAY DAY OB-
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SERVANCE. THE GSEE REQUESTED MINISTER OF LABOR LASKARIS TO AUTHORIZE MAY DAY RALLIES TO BE HELD ON SOME DAY OTHER THAN THE TRADITIONAL MAY 1 SINCE THIS YEAR IT COINCIDES WITH EASTER MONDAY, A MAJOR GREEK RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY. LASKARIS REPLIED THAT GREEK LAW PERMITS THE RESCHEDULING OF SECULAR HOLIDAYS ONLY WHEN THEY FALL ON SUNDAY, AND BECAUSE MAY 1 FALLS ON A MONDAY HE COULD

NOT AUTHORIZE ANY RESCHEDULING OF THE GSEE'S MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS.

3. THE GSEE LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD COMPLY WITH LASKARIS' DECISION AND HOLD ITS NATIONAL RALLY ON MAY 1 AT GSEE HEADQUARTERS IN ATHENS. HOWEVER, THE THREE LEFTIST FACTIONS WITHIN THE GSEE, REPRESENTING ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S PANHELLENIC SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (PASOK), THE MOSCOW-ORIENTED COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR, AND THE EURO-COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE INTERIOR, HAVE LET IT BE KNOWN INFORMALLY THAT THEIR FOLLOWERS WOULD HOLD A COUNTER RALLY ON MAY 4. THEY ALSO CALLED FOR A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE ON MAY 4 AS A DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY IN THE ORGANIZED LABOR MOVEMENT.

4. AS YET, THE GOG HAS NOT REACTED PUBLICLY TO THE CHALLENGE POSED BY THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE THREE LEFTIST FACTIONS. BOTH THE UNAUTHORIZED RALLY AND THE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED STRIKE WOULD BE ILLEGAL, BUT SO FAR NO LEFTIST LEADER HAS MADE ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH THE GOG COULD SINGLE OUT AS INCITEMENT TO AN ILLEGAL ACT.

5. COMMENT: THE GOG MAY CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE LEFTIST FACTIONS' DIRECT CHALLENGE BOTH TO LASKARIS' DECISION
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AND TO THE GSEE LEADERSHIP'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE DECISION, PROBABLY IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THE RALLY AND 24-HOUR STRIKE ON MAY 4 WILL RECEIVE LITTLE SUPPORT FROM GREEK WORKERS. THE MAY 4 RALLY, HOWEVER, PRESENTS THE UNFORTUNATE OPPORTUNITY FOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN POLICE AND THE WORKERS AND STUDENTS WHO WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE RALLY.
MCCLOSKEY

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